

One Book Snapshots

Timberland Regional Library

2005: "Secret Life of Bees"

- Committee of library staff members selected the book

Criteria for selection of book:

1. Be simple but powerfully written
2. Contain universal themes
3. Lend itself to in-depth discussion
4. Be of interest to readers from high school age through adult.

Partners:

- Major donors (provided funds):
 - Kline Family Foundation
 - Venture Bank
 - Capitol Medical Center
- In-kind sponsors (provided facilities)
 - Evergreen State College
 - Washington Performing Arts Center
 - Centralia College
 - Grays Harbor College
- Literary sponsors
 - Publishers gave copies of the book
 - Audio publishers gave copies of book
 - Bookstores gave discounts on the book and sold the book at special events
 - Worked with 7 bookstores in the region
- Media sponsors
 - TCTV filmed a PSA and broadcast it
 - Newspaper dailies printed 8 page tabloid inserts (reader's guides)—one daily gave it free, the other two at a discount

Conducted 85 programs in over 45 days. Programs included:

- Book It theatre performance
- Craft programs on bees
- Talks by beekeepers
- Exhibits
- Book discussions at all libraries

- Panel discussion with college faculty on the social issues addressed in the book
- Keynote: reader of the audio book discussed book and process of reading
- Special experts talked on the social issues in the book

2006: Highest Tide by local author, Jim Lynch

- Fireside Bookstore provided cash donation to have the local author speak at one venue in each county (5 times)
- In Olympia, the author spoke at the Washington Center for Performing Arts. 400 people attended.
- Worked with publishers and bookstores again. Used the same donors. TCTV filmed the author's talk. Dailies did inserts again.

2007: "My Antonia"

- Funded by a \$20,000 grant from National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) as a part of the Big Reads project
- Must select book from a pre-selected list of books provided by NEH

Events will include:

- Woman who impersonates Willa Cather
- Book It theater performance
- Musical performances from the time period of the book
- Workshops on recording memories
- Book discussions at every library

General thoughts and suggestions:

- Don't plan too many events
- It's not a requirement to have the author, you can do other things
- It's more difficult to get nationally known authors, however, on the other hand, publishers are becoming aware of these types of events and often can provide information.
- Theatrical performances connected with the book are popular.
- Book discussions were not as popular—but they felt they needed to do them in each library.

- Takes a huge amount of staff time. Using interns as gophers or logistics people is helpful. Can use college students, folks interested in public relations and events planning.
- Important to get a good committee
- Need someone who is really organized and can assign tasks
- Give enough notice so everyone has enough time to get the book
- Get as many copies available soon enough

Tacoma Public Library's Tacoma Reads Together

Mayor sponsors the program (but the library coordinates it and pays for it). The mayor appointed the selection committee. The selection committee consists of representatives of the major partners including a representative from the mayor's Young Adult Council. (Recently the library has used a smaller subcommittee of several librarians, the chair to make the full final recommendation) That committee submits 1 – 3 selections to the mayor with strong justifications for the selection. The mayor selects the book.

Partners of Tacoma Reads Together:

- Mayor's Office
- Tacoma News Tribune
- Tacoma School District
- Associated Ministries
- Tacoma Public Library Foundation
- Plus theme-affiliated partners depending upon the book selected, i.e. For "How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accent," it was Central Latino and for "The Pack" it is Black Collective.

The partners:

- Provide help, ideas, and speakers for programs (all)
- Help promote the project within their organization and more broadly (all)
- Provide mailing lists to the library and include information in their in-house newsletter (all)
- Provide advertising (News Tribune and others)
- Loan a person to serve as chair of the selection committee (Tacoma School District)
- Provide facilities, classrooms, study guides (Tacoma School District)

Criteria for the book:

- Addresses and explores a community issue and can engender discussions
- Available in inexpensive paperback format
- Readily available

- Not too big or long
- Can be discussed in high school classes
- Doesn't have to be a masterpiece of literature

Suggestions, guidance or lessons learned:

- Not everyone will read the book, but they may participate quietly at home and not even tell you. As a result, don't set your sights too high on how many will tell you that they've read the book.
- Many people are shy and do not want to talk about the book in public.
- TPL has had much more success with programs with experts discussing and/or debating the issues which are addressed in the book.

Types of activities:

- Programs to discuss issues brought up in the book, often using media (radio or newspaper folks) as moderators.
- Show films that relate to issues.
- Advertise with posters, buttons, sometime people dressed up in appropriate costume.
- Often will be a big kickoff to begin the effort.

For graphics and more information on types of programs:

- www.tacomapubliclibrary.org
 - Click on Program and Events. Click on Tacoma Reads Together.
 - Information on the current book. Information, graphics, programs on past Tacoma Reads Together is listed at the very bottom.

Sno-Isle Regional Library

Local community partners

- Washington Commission for the Humanities
- Island Thrift (a non-profit community service organization)
- WalMart
- Friends of the Oak Harbor Library
- Sno-Isle Libraries Foundation

Each partner is recognized on all of the print and web materials, as well as in the introduction to each author event.

With the exception of the Friends, these organizations provided funding only. The Friends of the Library, in addition to being involved in the planning and

development, facilitated book discussion groups, purchased extra copies of the specific title, and hosted the author event(s).

Words of Wisdom

- Involve the community.

Spokane County Library District

Partners

- Auntie's Bookstore (co-sponsor with the two library systems)
 - Work with the publisher to secure the author.
 - Work with other bookstores in the area to inform on program and determine ways to best promote within their organizations.
 - They sell author's books at the two author events that culminate the program.
- The library
 - Two PR and on graphic designers coordinates, designs, prints and distributes all program publicity, advertising and related materials, coordinates media relations.

Other partnerships

- Starbucks and other coffee shops (informally)
 - Posted program information
- High school and college
 - Some schools have promoted the program
- Spokane's alternative (and highly popular) newspaper
 - We get some in-kind advertising with.
- One area that Spokane Is Reading hasn't formalized or really had the resources to establish, is official partnerships with other community organizations, such as the schools or a Starbucks. We've really done the program ourselves (there's a small committee), and just haven't had the time to move beyond that. Fortunately, the program is still successful. We also in the past have received some corporate donations from local utilities, a credit union, etc. That has been a very low effort as well. Clearly, one or two well-established and reciprocal partnerships would be a value-add for the program.

General thoughts and suggestions

- Make sure objectives are very clear and realistic up front

- Understand that it can take time for your community to accept, understand and participate in something.
- One of the reasons Spokane Is Reading has been successful, in my opinion, is that it's become more familiar and expected each October.
- We also have a good relationship with our Books/Literacy reporters, and have worked well over time to make sure the value of the program is recognized, not just its existence.
- Also, once a date for your program (s) has been set, working backwards with a timeline to make sure that the right people (on a committee?) understand and are comfortable with their tasks and deadlines.
- Know your audience.
 - Not every program or author makes sense for every region or customer, and no one author or book is going to touch or appeal to everyone. And that's all right.